

facilities is for military medical readiness and the training of lifesaving instead of the taking of life. Current law allows military women and dependents to receive abortions in military facilities in the cases of rape, incest or when necessary to save the life of the mother.

The House voted several times to ban abortions at overseas military hospitals. A similar amendment offered by Representative Jane Harman in the fiscal year 1998 Defense Authorization Act was rejected 196-224. In 1998, the House National Security Committee rejected another attempt to allow privately funded abortions at these facilities. When considering the fiscal year 1996 defense authorization and appropriations bills, the House voted eight times in favor of the present ban.

In overseas locations where safe, legal abortions are not available, beneficiaries have the option of using space available travel for returning to the United States or traveling to another overseas location for the purpose of obtaining an abortion.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to turn over control of the time in the management of this amendment to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SANCHEZ). She is the originator of this amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK) for her help on this amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS).

(Mr. ANDREWS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ANDREWS. I thank my friend from California for yielding me this time.

Mr. Chairman, this is a question of constitutional rights. When someone puts on the uniform of the United States military, she should not forfeit her constitutional rights. If a different constitutional right were at stake here, I suspect that the attitude of those who oppose this amendment would be very different. They may not like the fact that the Constitution guarantees the right to choose, but it does. If we had a policy that said that you could not freely exercise religion at your own expense on military property in foreign countries, people would object vociferously to that because they would understand that there was something fundamentally wrong to denying people in the military their constitutional rights.

You may not like this constitutional right. You are free to try to change it. But it is a constitutional right. And to deny it to women who serve in uniform

is just wrong. The Sanchez amendment corrects that wrong. I would urge everyone to support it strongly as I do.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 30 seconds to respond. I assure the gentleman that the United States Supreme Court permits the Congress to discriminate and for us to make decisions with regard to the military. If you are too tall, if you are too short, if you are too heavy, if you are colorblind, if you are diabetic. We are permitted to decide how we can shape the force and we can also decide on rules and procedures for the military.

Mr. Chairman I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS).

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to the Meek amendment. The House has spoken on this issue many times. Each time it has rejected this amendment. Just last year the House rejected this same amendment offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY) by a vote of 190-232.

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By requiring U.S. military facilities to provide elective abortion on demand to uniformed personnel dependents, the Meek amendment would turn DOD medical treatment facilities into abortion clinics.

When the 1993 Clinton administration policy permitting abortions to be performed in military facilities, which was reversed in 1996 except in the cases of rape, incest and the life of the mother, when that was first begun, all military physicians as well as many nurses and supporting personnel refused to perform or even to assist in elective abortions.

Our troops already are demoralized enough. Why should we again ask them to do something to which they object?

I received a couple of letters on this issue. I just want to read a couple of quotes.

The National Right to Life Committee in a letter summed it up well by saying, "Facilities and personnel of the Federal Government should not be utilized to deliberately destroy the lives of innocent human beings."

And I received a letter from the Archdiocese for the Military Services which echoes this message by saying, "Military medical personnel have refused to take part in the procedure of life destroying abortion, citing the primary responsibility of our Nation's military services to preserve human life."

Mr. Chairman, I urge my colleagues to oppose again the Meek amendment.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I would just remind the gentleman who just spoke that there is already an objection clause and that no military personnel are forced to perform any of this.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. TAUSCHER), my friend.

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Chairman, I guess I am a little confused about the

subcommittee chairman's assertion that the military discriminates right now against people that are too tall and too other things when in fact I think what we would actually call those would be minimum standards for qualification to qualify to be a good soldier, airmen, Marine. The question I have is: Is there such a thing as being too female, because this is a specific issue for American fighting men and women, and this is about American women who have the right to have the right to choose as American citizens, but because they are on military duty overseas our colleagues are suggesting that they forfeit that right.

I think that is discriminatory, I think that is inappropriate, and I urge my colleagues to support the Sanchez amendment.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. JOHNSON).

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Indiana for yielding this time to me knowing that we do not agree on the subject. I just want to make a couple of points:

First of all, these are privately funded, these are not taxpayer funded. Secondly, we have the personnel to perform these procedures because they perform them in the case of rape, incest and the life of the mother. Thirdly, our men and women under arms serve under American law and American command, and like it or not, they have the same right to legal medical procedures as women throughout America. And fourthly, this is terribly discriminatory. If someone is an officer, they can afford to have their wife fly home or their daughter who got in trouble fly home. If someone is a common enlisted guy, they cannot, and space available does not necessarily work.

Do my colleagues really want them to go out on the medical economy of some of these foreign deployments where death is just about as likely as any other outcome? Do they not have a right as service men and women to have either their wives safe or, as women, to have a safe procedure? Mothers have a right to live for their children even if they have to elect this procedure.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS), my colleague.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Chairman, I rise to express my strong support for the Meek Sanchez amendment. I find it ironic that strong women, brave women, who enter the military to fight for their country then cannot get the same basic rights that people back home already have, rights they are fighting to protect. I think that this policy is the height of hypocrisy, and this amendment should not even be debated, it should not even be a question. It even should not be a consideration.

Mr. Chairman, let us extend to the fighting women in the military the